

County has budget, few are happy

Franklin resigns out of opposition to budget

By AARON ALDRIDGE
Staff Writer

Sullivan County has a budget, but not too many people are satisfied with the outcome.

 **Newport**

"Is it perfect? Probably not," Rep. John Cloutier, D-Claremont, said. "But we need a budget in place."

After the budget passed on Friday in a close vote of 7-6, Peter Franklin, D-Newport, announced he would resign his delegation position as chairman effective at the next delegation meeting because of his strong opposition to the budget.

The \$27.3 million budget was the recommended budget from the Executive Finance Committee and is about \$300,000 less than the budget recommended by the county commissioners.

But EFC chairwoman Brenda Ferland, I-Charlestown, spoke against her own committee's budget because a majority of the additional cuts deal with

personnel changes and the end of future plans for a new jail.

"I don't support this budget from the Executive Finance Committee," Ferland told the delegation. "I'm truly disappointed we are voting on a budget that halts all plans for work on a new corrections facility."

Sullivan County Department of Corrections director of operations Capt. John Milliken stormed out of the meeting after the budget passed, throwing his copy of the budget in the trash and slamming the door.

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Milliken had his hand raised for more than an hour during the meeting, but Franklin refused to recognize him stating that the meeting was not a public forum.

According to Ferland, the major differences between the commissioner's budget and the EFC budget are limiting salary increases to 3 percent, cutting the county grants by \$90,000 and zeroing out the line item for autopsies.

To compound the county's financial situation, County Manager Ed Gil de Rubio said the census at the nursing home has dropped off considerably, costing the county thousands of dollars per day in lost revenue.

Gil de Rubio said, "\$4,000 a day in losses is conservative. Right now we're hemorrhaging."

Gil de Rubio said the reason the county is losing so much money is because since the middle of June hospitals have stopped referring patients who need skilled care to the nursing home.

Additionally, the EFC budget cut funding for recreational activities which Gil de Rubio said could place the nursing home in legal hot water.

"We will have to cut back on night time and holiday recreation that will put us in direct violation of Health and Human Services regulations," Gil de Rubio said.

Rep. Sue Gottling, D-Sunapee, said she thought the line item for recreation was adequate because it left \$30,000 in the budget.

But Ferland disagreed and argued the budget was in such disarray there was no way to get the EFC to agree to anything.

"You could work on this budg-

How the representatives voted on the budget

James Phinizy, D-Acworth	No
Brenda Ferland, I-Charlestown	No
John Cloutier, D-Claremont	Yes
Larry Converse, D-Claremont	Yes
Tom Donovan, D-Claremont	Yes
Ray Gagnon, D-Claremont	Yes
Ellen Nielsen, D-Claremont	Yes
Carla Skinder, D-Cornish	No
Arthur Jillette, D-Goshen	Yes
Peter Franklin, D-Newport	No
Beverly Rodeschin, R-Newport	No
Matthew Houde, D-Plainfield	No
Sue Gottling, D-Sunapee	Yes

et for another eight years and not get a consensus," Ferland said.

Rep. Carla Skinder, D-Cornish, did not support the EFC budget because of the effects on personnel.

"We need to retain the people we have," Skinder said. "I do not support relatively small cuts in a budget that affects personnel. \$300,000 is small change."

Franklin was also opposed to the EFC budget stating the EFC technically has until Aug. 30 to present a budget. According to Franklin, if a budget is not passed by the delegation by Sept. 1, the commissioner's budget automatically goes into effect.

"We have six or seven weeks left to straighten out the problems we recognize in the budget," Franklin said. "I believe there can be a responsible budget. The current budget is destined to increase the deficit."

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